

CHAPTER VI

FASTING

Fast is one-fourth of faith, as the Prophet said: Fast is half of patience and patience is half of faith. Of all the regulations of religion, fast keeps special connection with God. The Prophet said: God says: Every good action except fast will be rewarded from ten to seven hundred folds, but fast is only for My sake and it is I who will reward him for it. God says: Those who are patient will be given rewards without measure - 39 : 13. Fast is half of patience. Its reward transcends account. The excellence of fast is known from the following Hadis: The Prophet said: By One in whose hand there is my life, the fragrance of the mouth of a fasting man is dearer to God than the fragrance of musk. God says: The fasting man gives up sexual intercourse, food and drink for My sake. So fast is kept only for My sake and it is I who will reward him for it. The Prophet said: Paradise has got a gate named Rayyan. None except a fasting man will enter Paradise by that gate. God has promised His vision as reward of fast.

The Prophet said: There are two joys for a fasting man - one joy at the time of breaking fast and another joy at the time of meeting with his Lord. The Prophet said: Everything has got a gateway. Fast is the gateway of worship. He said: The sleep of a fasting man is worship. He said: When the month of Ramzan comes, the gates of Paradise are opened and the gates of Hell are shut up, the devils are put in chains and a proclaimer proclaims: O seeker of good, advance. O seeker of evil, come back. God says: Eat and drink cheerfully for what you missed in past days. In other words, eat and drink cheerfully for what you were deprived in your fasting days. The Prophet said: God will make His angels view with an ascetic saying: O young man who has suppressed his passions for My sake and who has spent his youth for My sake, you are to Me like some of My angels.

The Prophet said about a fasting man: God says: O My angels, look to My servant, he has given up his sexual passion, his pleasures, his food and drink for My pleasure. God says: 'No soul knows what has been kept concealed for him pleasing to his eyes. This is the reward for what they have done'. It has been said regarding the verse that this action was fast, as God says: The

patient will be given rewards without account (39 : 13). It appears from this that rewards will be open for the fasting men and they will not be kept for measurement as it is only for God. All worships are for God but the honour of fast is like that of the Ka'ba. Everything in the world has got a speciality. The speciality of fasting is forbearance and sacrifice, as it is the action of the mind and secret from public eye, but all other actions fall within human eyes. Nobody sees fast except God as it is a secret action with sincere patience. Secondly, it is punishment for the enemy of God as the way of the devil is sexual passion and it increases through the help of food and drink. For this reason, the Prophet said: The devil runs through human body like the circulation of blood. Curb it by hunger. For this reason, the Prophet said to Ayesha; Knock at the door of Paradise. She asked: How? The Prophet said: With hunger, specially when fast controls the devil, shut his path and make narrow his passage. Then its connection remains with only God. If the enemy of God is controlled, it will be helping God.

God says: If you help God, God will help you and will make your feet firm - 47 : 8. So at the beginning, a servant will make efforts and then hope for reward of God. For this reason, God says: I will show certainly My path to those who strive hard for us (29 : 69). God says: God does not change the condition of a people unless they change their own condition (13 : 12). This change is said to be due to increase of sexual passion as it is the grazing field of the devil and a place for his movement. The devil moves in it till it is fertile. God's light is not disclosed to the person in whom he moves. The Prophet said: If the devil had not moved in the human minds, they could have surely known the mysteries of heaven. For this reason, fast is the door of worship and its shield. When the excellence of fast is so wide, its secret and open conditions and its rules and regulations should be known and they will be discussed in three sections.

SECTION 1

SIX COMPULSORY DUTIES OF FAST

(1) To seek the new moon of Ramzan. If there is cloud, thirty days of Shaban must be completed. The sight of the new moon of Ramzan is based only on the evidence of one just man of intellect,

while the moon of I'dul Fitr is based on the evidence of two just pious Muslims. If the new moon is seen in one place and is not seen in another place and if the distance between the two places is less than about two miles, it is compulsory for the inhabitants of both the places to keep fast. If however the distance is more, the inhabitants of each place will decide the case separately.

(2) **TO MAKE NIYYAT OF FASTING:** To make niyyat every night with firm faith is compulsory. One niyyat for full Ramzan month is not sufficient. If there is no niyyat of compulsory fast, it will be considered as optional fast. So niyyat should be made every night.

(3) No to admit anything outside in the body willingly during fast. If a man eats something, drinks something and does any such act, it will break fast. If a man gets cupping, it will not spoil his fast. If water enters the belly unwillingly, it will not spoil fast.

(4) Abstinence from sexual intercourse during fast. If through mistake, a fasting man has got sexual intercourse, it will not spoil his fasting.

(5) Abstinence from deliberate emission of semen. If deliberately semen is emitted, it will break fast.

(6) Abstinence from deliberate vomiting. Wilful vomiting breaks fast.

ATONEMENT FOR BREAK OF A FAST

There are four modes of compulsory atonement of fast if it breaks. (1) **Making amends.** It is compulsory on every major Muslim to keep fast on other days for break of fast in Ramzan. A menstruating woman must compulsorily keep fast on other days. One need not keep Qaza fast consequitively. (2) **Kaffara** or Atonement is not compulsory except in case of sexual intercourse in which case one is to set free a slave or fast for two consequitive months, failing that to feed sixty poor men with one meal. (3) **Imsak** or refraining oneself from food drink, and from sexual intercourse. If a man breaks fast carelessly but without excuse, it is compulsory on him to refrain from food, drink and sexual intercourse for the remaining portion of the day. (4) **Fidya** or expiation: if a pregnant or suckling woman does not keep fast for fear of her child, it is compulsory on her to give its compensation

by giving one Mud food-stuff to a poor man and she will have to fast Qaza in addition. If an old-man of age is unable to keep fast, he may compensate each fast by giving food crops of one Mud for each day.

SUNNATS OF FAST ARE SIX: (1) To eat Sehri latter, (2) to break fast before Magrib prayer with dates or water, (3) not to cleanse teeth after mid-day (4) to give charity, (5) to recite the Quran, (6) and to observe I' tekafeen a mosque in the last ten nights of Ramzan month. This was the habit of the Prophet of God. When the ten nights of Ramzan remained, he prepared himself for greater divine service for the remaining days of Ramzan and ordered the inmates of the house to do the same. He used to stay in the mosque without coming out of it except when pressed by necessity such as calls of nature.

SECTION 2

SECRETS OF FAST

Know, O dear readers, that there are three classes of fast. (1) fast of the general Muslims. It is to restrain oneself from eating and drinking and from sexual passion. This is the lowest kind of fast. (2) Fast of the few select Muslims. In this kind of fasting, besides the above things, one refrains himself from sins of hands, feet, sight and other limbs of body. (3) Fast of the highest class. These people keep fast of mind. In other words, they don't think of anything else except God and the next world. They think only of the world with the intention of the next world as it is the seed ground for the future. A certain sage said: One sin is written for one whose efforts during the day are made only to prepare for breaking fast. This highest class of people are the Prophets and the near ones of God. This kind of fast is kept after sacrificing oneself and his thoughts fully to God. This is the meaning of the verse: Say God and then leave them sporting in their vain talks (6: 91).

The fasting of select for pious men rests on six duties for gaining perfection. (1) To restrain eye sight from what is evil and from things which divert attention from God's remembrance. The Prophet said: Eye sight is a poisonous arrow out of the arrows of the devil. If a man gives it up, God gives him such a faith of which the taste is tasted by his mind. The Prophet said:

Five things destroys fasting - falsehood, back-biting, slander, perjury and sight with sexual passion. (2) To restrain the tongue from useless talk, false-speaking, back-biting, slander, abusive speech, obscenity, hypocrisy and enmity, to adopt silence and to keep the tongue busy with the remembrance of God and reciting the Quran. The sage Sufiyan Saori said: Back-biting spoils fast. Hazrat Muzahed said: Two things spoil fast, back-biting and falsehood. The Prophet said: Fast is like a shield. If a man keeps fast, let him not rebuke and dispute. If a man wants to assault or make quarrel, let him say to him: I am fasting. There is in Hadis: Two women kept fast at the time of the Prophet. They were so much overstickens with hungers at the end of the day that their lives were about to end. They were sent to the Prophet so that he might order them to break fast. He sent a cup for them telling them that they should vomit in it what they ate. One of them vomitted fresh blood and fresh flesh which filled up half of the cup. Another vomitted similarly and filled up the cup. The Prophet then said: The two women fasted with lawful food but broke it with unlawful food. The two women back-bited the people and ate their flesh.

(3) To restrain the ear from hearing the evil talks because what is unlawful to utter is also unlawful to hear. For this reason, God placed the eater of unlawful food and the hearer of unlawful words on the same level. God says: The hearers of falsehood and eaters of unlawful food - 5:46. God says: Why do not the God-fearing men and the worldly renunciated men prohibit talking sinful words and unlawful eating - 5:68? To remain silent at the time of back-biting is unlawful. God says: You are then like them - 9 : 139. Thus said the Prophet: The back-biter and the hearer of back-biting are equal cosharers in sin.

(4) To save hand, feet and other organs from sins, from evil deeds and to save belly from doubtful things at the time of breaking fast. There is no meaning of fasting if it is kept with lawful food and broken with unlawful food. He is like a man who destroys a town for constructing a building. It is also injurious to eat lawful food in excess and hot to eat it little. He who fasts and does evil deeds is like a patient who restrains himself from eating fruits for fear of disease but who swallows poison. A sin is like eating poison. He who drinks this poison is a fool. An unlawful thing is like poison and it destroys

religion and a lawful thing is like a medicine. Its little does benefit and its much spoils. The Prophet said: There are many fasting men who do not gain by fasting except hunger and thirst. On being asked the reason, he said: He refrains from eating lawful food and breaks fast by eating human flesh by back-biting. That is unlawful.

(5) To eat even lawful food so much at the time of breaking fast that it fills up the belly. A belly filled up with too much lawful food is hated more than all other reservoirs. A fasting man eats in full at the time of breaking fast what he could not eat during day time. He prepares different kinds of foods. The object of fast is to keep belly vacant in order to control passion and to increase God-fear. If the belly remains full from morning to evening, sexual passion rises high and greed and temptation reign supreme.

(6) To keep the mind of a fasting man between fear and hope, because he does not know whether his fast will be accepted or not, whether he will be near God or not. This should be the case for every divine service. Once Hasan Basri was passing by a party of men who were playing and sporting. He said: God made this month of Ramzan for running in which the people will be running for good deeds and competing with one another. The object of fast is to anoint one with one of the divine attributes. That attributes. That attribute is Samadiat meaning to be bereft of hunger and thirst and to follow the angels as far as possible being free from passion. The rank of a man is far more superior than that of a lower animal as he can control his passion by dint of his intellect, but his rank is lower than that of an angel as his passion is strong and he is tried by it. Angels are near God. This nearness keeps connection with attribute but not with space. The Prophet said: Fast is a trust. Let everyone of you keep that trust. When he read this verse. "God orders you to give trust to its rightful owners (4 : 61)." he placed his hands on his ears and eyes and said: Ear is a trust and eye is a trust. If it had not been a trust of fasting, the Prophet would not have said: I am fasting. In other words, I have kept my tongue as trust for saving it. How can I give it up for replying you? So it appears that for every affair there are secret and open matters. It is now open to you to observe both the secret and open matters or to observe either of them.

SECTION 3

OPTIONAL FAST AND ITS RULES

Know, O dear readers that additional fasts are sunnat if observed in the days of good and excellence. Some of these days occur every year, some every month and some every week. Those which occur every year are the days of Arafat, the days of Ashura, the first ten days of the month of Zilhaj, the first ten days of the month of Muharram and all holy months. The Prophet used to fast most in the month of Shaban. There is in one Hadis: Of all the fasts after the fast of the month of Ramzan, the best fast is in the month of Muharram as it is the beginning of the year and founded on good and most dear for blessing. The Prophet said: One day's fast in the holy month is better than the fast for thirty other days. The Prophet said: If a man fasts for three days, Thursday, Friday and Saturday in the holy month God writes for him divine service of seven hundred years in lieu of every day. There is in Hadis: When half of Shaban passes, there is no fast up to Ramzan. It is not lawful to keep fast for two or three days before Ramzan. Zil-haj, Muharram, Rajab and Shaban are the months of excellence and Jil Qaedah, Zil-Haj, Muharram and Rajab are the holy months, Zil-Haj is the best among them as there is therein the day of Haj and fixed days. There is in Hadis: Divine service for the first ten days of Zil-haj is dearer to God than that in other months. Fast of one day during these days is equal to fast of one year and one night's prayer is equal to the prayer of the Blessed night. They asked: Is the reward better than that of Jihad? He said: Not that of even Jihad in the way of God, but the reward is equal to that of the Jihad of a man in which his horse is wounded and he himself is martyred.

MONTHLY FAST: The days of month in which fast are to be kept are the first day, middle day and the last day of every month. In addition, there is the fast of Ayyam Biz on the 13th, 14th and 15th of the moon.

WEEKLY FAST: In every week, Thursday, Friday and Monday are good. These are the days of excellence.

ANNUAL FAST: The best way is to keep fast for one day and break it on the following day; The Prophet said: The treasures of the world were presented to me. I rejected them and said: I shall remain hungry for one day and take food on another. When I

shall take food, I shall praise thee and when I shall remain hungry I shall seek humility from Thee. The Prophet said: The best fast is that of my brother Daud. He fasted for a day and broke it on the following day. The Prophet instructed Abdullah-b-Amr to fast thus. He said: I shall be able to fast more. The Prophet said: Fast for one day and break fast on the following day. He said: I wish to keep better fast than this. Then the Prophet said: There is no better fast than this. It is reported that the Prophet did not fast any full month except Ramzan.

It has been reported that the Prophet sometimes continued to fast in such a way that the people thought that he won't break it and sometimes he continued to keep no fast till the people thought that he won't keep fast. He slept sometimes in such a way that the people thought that he won't rise from bed and sometimes he kept wakeful in such a way that the people thought that he won't sleep again.